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POSSIBILITIES OF BEAUTY IN THE CONGREGATIONAL ORDER

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The "Congregational Order" is a term that once was frequently used, but has of late years sunk more or less into oblivion. The term was applied to the theory of church management, church polity, and church worship which was adopted three hundred years ago by our own Puritan and Separatist churches of New England. Those groups of worshipers who banded themselves together as churches under the bonds of a covenant, who sedulously managed their own affairs, resenting any interference on the part of an external authority, who were their own authority, and who lived together as churches upon the terms of a self-respecting sympathy and a friendly independence are said to belong to and to constitute the Congregational Order. For the first few generations of New England history these churches of the Congregational Order were the only churches. They held the field without rivals. Their meeting-houses dotted the landscape, and their membership included the entire freeman population of these New England colonies. It was a slow and difficult matter to break down the exclusiveness of this New England theocracy. And it was not until New England had been settled for upward of fifty years at least that churches of the ecclesiastical order began timidly to come into existence and fight for their own survival in this unfriendly and inhospitable Puritan atmosphere.

These churches of the Congregational Order were alike not only in their theory of church polity and constitution but also in their devotional practice. Their method of conducting church worship was distinctive. While there were slight variations in custom as between the several churches, for every church in this and in all

other matters was a law unto itself, yet the similarity of their underlying contention as to the true nature of a church found its expression in an essential similarity in their accepted manner and custom of conducting the various church offices or occasions, not only the Sunday services of worship, but the minor activities of baptism, admission, the Lord's Supper, and church discipline. It is therefore permissible to say that the term Congregational Order covers not only the theory of church structure and polity but also the practice of church worship and devotional procedure.

My purpose is to examine this Congregational Order of church worship, not in a mood of ridicule or of hostility, which we are bound to admit has become more or less the fashion among us of late, but in a mood of sympathy and reasonable open-mindedness, and to see if there can be found in it anything of that aesthetic value which we are coming more and more to demand as an essential quality in our church services. Such an examination will be timely and very much to the point. During the last generation or so there has grown up an increasing interest in the emotional or the sensuous side of church worship, the side that appeals primarily to the senses rather than to the thought of the worshiper. We have been feeling, very properly, that an act of worship, in order to be thoroughly satisfactory, must bring all sides of the mind into some sort of exercise and some sort of gratification; it must have its direct effect not only upon our powers of thought and speculation but also upon our powers of volition and emotional reaction. It must not alone guide the intellect; it must also uplift the feeling and stimulate the will. An act of worship must properly bring the whole creature into responsive participation, so that the influences of that act of worship may find entrance through all available channels and may exert their maximum of power upon the worshiper.

Interest in the emotional or the sensuous possibilities of Congregational worship is due in a measure to the feeling that those possibilities have been ignored, and that it is high time that they were recognized and cultivated. We feel that that side of the Congregational worshiping capacity has been starved, and therefore it is to that side that our attention of late has turned. This feeling of emotional hunger, of vague dissatisfaction with the supposed

emotional or aesthetic paucity of Congregational worship, has engendered in many Congregationalists a sort of a factitious hospitality toward rites and ceremonies, the mystic symbolism, the awe-compelling decencies and pomp of the ecclesiastical and hierarchical orders, with all their music, and color, and vestments, and appealing imagery, and lovely pageantry. Just because that side of human nature demands its proper gratification in an act of worship, and just because Congregationalists have unquestionably denied that craving, it follows most naturally that the revolt takes place. One draft of this rich chalice of ritualism mounts to our brains like new wine. We are captivated, enthralled.

It is not surprising at all that those forms of organized religion which employ the aesthetic or the emotional appeal are very much in vogue just now. In fact, when one considers how comparatively sterile our own Puritanism is in emotionality, how persistently we as Congregationalists have employed the intellectual appeal to the virtual exclusion of all others, and when one couples with that the undeniable fact that the speculations of theology have largely lost their interest for a generation which has been more concerned with matters of social and industrial moment, more concerned in cultivating the secular arts and sciences of this worldly life than in constructing philosophical or theological hypotheses, it becomes evident that the appeal of Congregational worship is strongest just where the ordinary citizen of the day is least inclined to respond, and is weakest just where the ordinary citizen is most inclined to respond. Is it not fair to say that Congregationalism is, or has been up to very recently, largely out of touch with the prevailing temper of the times? Tendencies would at least seem to support such a statement. Not only are the ritual forms of worship better attended, but among Congregationalists there is the widespread endeavor to supply what has appeared to be their own lack—to “enrich” their service by the introduction of expensive music, anthems, chants, responses, and by the adoption of certain stated forms of worship, such as liturgical prayers, confessions of faith, and in many cases vestments, processions, and lay readers.

In view of these things an effort to inquire intelligently into the aesthetic possibilities of those few forms of worship which

are distinctly Congregational cannot be wholly untimely. Such an effort must precede any attempt to cultivate those hidden possibilities.

It is necessary to remember in the first place that Puritanism arose originally as a protest against empty formalism and spiritual barrenness. To this extent Puritanism in worship was itself an effort to preserve the "beauty of holiness"; an effort to rescue the aestheticism of worship from the decay of a meaningless superstition into which it was bidding fair to sink. While it may be affirmed with some justice that in certain fields art is its own excuse for being, it is safe to say that in religious worship there cannot be such a thing as art for art's sake. Beauty in worship is wholly dependent upon sincerity. A religious service is impressive and dignified and therefore beautiful in exact proportion as it is meaningful and vital to the spiritual interests of the worshiper. That is one of the fundamental canons of religious expression. The moment sincerity is lost, that moment beauty, dignity, impressiveness, are utterly destroyed.

It is a familiar historical fact that the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had sunk to a very lamentable condition. Its livings were looked upon as sinecures and were sought by a priesthood whose first concern was the securing for themselves of an adequate livelihood. Its teachings and moral influences were unable to stem the tide of pleasure-loving jollity which flooded the rural communities of England during those years, finding expression in the boisterous and often cruel and unclean pastimes of the countryside, such as bear baitings, Maypole dances, and carousals. It was from these sports that there arose the affectionate nickname "Merrie England." Against the degrading tendency of these and similar customs the church could not offer any effective resistance. Perhaps the church did not try to resist. At all events the moral safeguards of religion were not in evidence, and the church of course had to take the blame.

Add to this the vast amount of simony and fraud that was practiced in the frantic scramble to procure lucrative ecclesiastical offices and privileges, the dual holdings, the absenteeism, the general indifference to the spiritual needs of the people, and the grasping

avarice of men in high places, all of which is mercilessly shown forth in Hugh Latimer's sermons, and we can paint a fairly vivid picture of the Church of England at that time. It was pervaded with corruption, spiritual indifference, and hypocrisy. Its forms of worship were emptied of their true content and stood forth as mere forms and nothing more. Its outward semblance became a hollow farce, a shell within which the preserving spirit had died. Its beauty, to the discerning eye, was withered because it was no longer informed by that sincerity which is the very life of beauty. Henceforth it bore much the same relation to real beauty that the pressed flower bears to the living blossom.

Never fear but that there were discerning eyes to note and deeply resent the change. Those were the eyes of Puritanism. Those eyes were sharp enough to detect the danger which always attends formalism in worship, the danger of hypocrisy, the danger of forgetting the spirit of worship, in dependence upon its technique. And they were not slow in drawing the perfectly logical, although by no means necessary, conclusion that this decadence had taken place, not in spite of, but because of, its ritualism. Accordingly, as the Puritans increased in power they took form as a spirit of protest against the corruptions of the church, and against the ritualistic customs which in their eyes were both identified with those corruptions and in a measure the cause of those corruptions. They nourished in their hearts a deep-rooted hatred of all set forms of worship—a hatred that was inflamed by two great forces which were then most rife: the influence of Martin Luther and his German Reformation, and the influence of the Bible, which was undergoing its several English translations and was being more and more read in private. These two influences fell into exact alignment with the natural trend of Puritan prejudice and served to cement those prejudices into a mighty fortress of hatred.

Ecclesiasticism became the scarlet woman of Revelation, and the wizards and necromancers who peep and mutter, the Pharisees who were likened unto whited sepulchers, the phylacteries, the vain repetitions, the much speaking, the offering to idols, all found their equally detestable counterparts in the intoning priesthood, the clerical favorites and place hunters, the surplices, genuflections,

crucifixes, and written prayers of the Church of England. These were all rags and tags of popery or prelacy, and pope and prelate were Antichrist.

As against all this, the Puritan set up his manner of worship—a worship which in its utter austerity, simplicity, and informality offered as great a contrast as was possible to the formalism and ritual of the established churches. And he did this, not because he hated beauty, but because in his clear sight that which ought to have been beautiful had ceased to be beautiful since it had lost its sincerity. The Puritan protest was as a matter of fact a revolt in the interest of beauty, in that it was an attempt to rehabilitate worship in that vesture which can alone give it any real beauty, the vesture of spiritual sincerity.

In attempting to do this they of course went to the other extreme; but any fair-minded man must agree that there was ample justification for extreme measures, and that the aesthetic theory upon which they unconsciously labored, that worship must first of all be sincere and then it will of its own accord be impressive, dignified, and beautiful, was and is a sound theory.

These then were the antiritualistic prejudices which the Puritans brought to New England. And this was the mold in which they took pains to cast the outward habits and expressions of worship in the churches which they proceeded to erect. All things must be honest, genuine, sincere, in strict accord with biblical injunction. Their church buildings, or, as they did not disdain to call them, their meetinghouses, were plain, unadorned, substantial structures, costing as much as they could well afford. They were not niggardly with their money, but their money was spent for commodiousness and solidity of structure rather than for comfort and ornamentation. It is perhaps fair to say that in appearance these earliest meetinghouses were uniformly ungainly and repellent. One is tempted to conclude, in some instances, that they took some pains to secure the greatest possible degree of ugliness as to location, surroundings, and appearance. Doubtless in a few isolated cases a meetinghouse might have been found that offered suggestions of grace, and that pleased the eye with the subtle charm of line and

proportion. We can hardly avoid considering such cases purely accidental.

There was nothing about the building within or without to suggest physical comfort. The windows were clear glass. The seats were rough benches or forms. At one end or at one side was a platform upon which stood the pulpit. Below it stood the communion table. The seats for the ruling elders and deacons, where there were these officers, were the seats of honor nearest the platform. Some of the meetinghouses had bells hung in a little cupola on the roof. This bell was rung to summon the worshipers on a Sabbath day. Services were at nine o'clock or earlier on Sunday morning and at two o'clock on Sunday afternoon. Where there was no stationary bell the worshipers were notified that it was church time by the beating of a drum, or perhaps in some instances by ringing a hand bell, such as a town-crier would use, up and down the village street. The ministers wore no vestments save the simple black preaching gown with the white bands. There was no instrumental music at first. The bass viol and other instruments made their appearance gradually and against much opposition. The church organ, or, as it was called, the "chist o' whistles," aroused violent alarm and opposition which it took years to overcome, and it was not generally permitted until well on into the nineteenth century. What music there was, being wholly vocal, unaccompanied, and interrupted every two lines to permit of the lining out of the next two, must have been excessively painful to any delicate musical year.

The full complement of officers in the original churches comprised the two teaching elders, the two ruling elders, four deacons, and one or two widows. The teaching elders were also called the pastor and the teacher. They were held in equal honor. Their functions have been combined in the modern minister, but they were more or less distinct at that time. Even today, when we speak of a minister of our acquaintance as being an ideal pastor but not much of a scholar, or as being a recluse, a scholar, a fine preacher, but not much of a pastor, we are drawing the very distinction which was openly recognized at that time, and which

constituted the difference between pastor and teacher. The one, as his name implies, was the pastor of the flock, whose duty it was to have charge of the intimate spiritual and moral welfare of his people. His preaching was called exhorting and was calculated to arouse and inspire. The other, the teacher, was the theological instructor. He was the student, the writer, the theological educator. His sermons were doctrinal essays or lectures calculated to guide the people in their thinking and lead them to hold correct orthodox convictions.

The two ruling elders were usually the two weightiest and most influential laymen of the town or parish. They might be called the business managers of the parish. They had oversight of the countless social relationships. Matters of discipline were referred to them. Applications for admission to the church or dismissal from the church were addressed to them.

The deacons were the treasurers, collectors, and disbursing agents of the church. Contributions were handed to them, and needy members of the parish applied to them for assistance.

The widows, or, as they were called in later times, the deaconesses, were women whose office was to minister to those cases of need or distress in which a man for obvious reasons could not gracefully interfere. A widow must be at least sixty years of age and physically strong enough to endure the very considerable hardships and labors of her position. In addition to these qualifications there was doubtless demanded of her a certain native tact and refinement of nature. For these reasons it was seldom that this office could be filled. There were few if any churches whose complement of officers included the widows.

It would be a mistake to draw the lines hard and sharp between these various official functions. There was much overlapping and duplication of functionality. All four elders had a voice in questions of discipline and in granting admissions or dismissals. One or the other ruling elder might sometimes act as the preacher or, to use the common phrase, "bear testimony." Yet in a general way their several duties were as I have tried to outline them.

All the officers had their stated places at the Sunday service. The teaching elders were upon the platform, the ruling elders and deacons in their appointed seats directly under the platform, the most eminent seats in the meetinghouse, suggested of course by the "chief seats in the synagogue." Service began usually at nine o'clock or perhaps a little earlier. First there was an invocation by the pastor, in length fifteen minutes or so, the people standing. Then the teacher read a chapter of the Bible, expounding it as he went along. Then a psalm was sung. As there were no psalm books, the words were lined out by one of the ministers, two lines at a time. Some gifted member in the congregation was expected to "set the tune" and take the lead in singing the two lines after they had been lined out. These psalms were metrical paraphrases of the psalms in the Bible, rendered in rather grotesque English rhyme and rhythm. As translations they were often grossly misleading, so much so that the learned New England divines could not endure to have them used, and accordingly put their heads together and compiled a new translation, the famous Bay Psalm Book, or the psalm book used in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay. Copies of this Bay Psalm Book are now exceedingly rare and are worth considerably more than their weight in gold. To be exact, there are but nine copies known to be in existence, and one of these was sold in the middle of the nineteenth century for over \$1,200. This Bay Psalm Book, printed in 1640 by Samuel Day, of Cambridge, was the first considerable bit of printing done in the colony. It ran through six or seven editions and was in well-nigh universal use throughout the New England churches of the seventeenth century. The later editions were equipped with music as well as with words. John Eliot, one of the three translators, frankly declares in his preface that the paraphrases are not cast in especially good poetic form, and warns the reader that literal accuracy of text has invariably been sought at the expense of poetical technique. This is so apparent to us as we read these clumsy and often uncouth lines that it is reassuring to be told that even they were quite aware of this defect and took pains to explain it. Some of these paraphrases, however, are clothed in a certain rugged beauty which

gives them a peculiar charm. Here, for example, is the Twenty-third Psalm:

The Lord to mee a shepherd is,
want therefore shall not I.
Hee in the folds of tender-grasse,
doth cause me down to lie:

To waters calme me gently leads
Restore my soul doth hee;
he doth in paths of righteousness:
for his names sake lead mee.

Yea though in valley of death's shade
I walk, none ill I'll fear;
Because thou art with me, thy rod,
and staffe my comfort are.

For me a table thou hast spread,
in presence of my foes;
thou dost anoint my head with oyle,
my cup it over-flowes.

Goodness and mercy surely shall
all my dayes follow mee:
and in the Lord's house I shall dwell
so long as dayes shall bee.

For tunes they had at their disposal a collection of some forty arranged by Thomas Ravenscroft, Bachelor of Music, and printed in 1621. These were for the greater part perfectly simple, familiar, old plain songs, with here and there an air borrowed from French, Dutch, or Italian sources. They strike us as being all very much alike, so that we are not surprised to read in Sewell's diary that intending to set the psalm to one tune he realized after it had been sung that he had actually set it to another. Some of these old tunes, such, for example, as Winchester, Dundee, and York, are in constant use among us today and may be found in any well-edited church hymnal. Others have fallen into disuse and probably would be recognized by very few, even if they were heard. Some of their names were Wells, Salisbury, Bristol, Gloucester, Christ Hospital, Martyr's Tune, etc. Psalm 23 was usually set to Winchester, and we can very easily imagine the effect of those simple,

stinted phrases sung in unison, two lines at a time, to that stately and dignified old tune.

To return now to the morning service, there was first the fifteen-minute invocation by the pastor, then a chapter was read and expounded by the teacher, then a psalm was sung. Then followed the sermon and exhortation by the pastor; then a lengthy prayer by the teacher, concluding with a blessing or benediction. There was nothing fixed about this order. Sometimes there was a long prayer before the sermon as well as after. And sometimes there was a second psalm sung at the close of the service just before the blessing.

The Lord's Supper was observed once a month at the conclusion of the morning service, which by the way might easily have been two hours or more in length. Notice of the Lord's Supper was given generally two weeks before the day of its observance. It was administered to none but members of the church and such visitors as came with letters testifying to their membership in some other church. Non-communicants were, however, permitted to remain as witnesses to the ceremony. This sacrament was conducted with great simplicity. The teaching and ruling elders seated themselves about the table, the deacons and members of the church sitting in silence meanwhile upon their forms or benches. One of the ministers offered prayer, then blessed and consecrated the bread and wine according to the formula in the eleventh chapter of I Corinthians. Then he passed the bread in a charger to those at the table, and they in turn to those upon the benches. So it went from hand to hand without the least formality until all had eaten, and the charger was passed back again to the table. The same way with the cup, after which the other minister offered a prayer, a psalm was sung, and with a short blessing the congregation was dismissed.

However lacking in formality this morning service may have been, the afternoon service was if anything still less formal. One is tempted to think of the afternoon service as the business meeting of the church. The congregation gathered at two o'clock. There were the same features, the invocation, the chapter from the Bible, the psalm, except that in the afternoon these portions of the

worship were performed by the minister who did not perform them in the morning. Then there was the sermon or discourse upon doctrine by the teacher, concluded by a prayer. Then there came the baptisms which were to be performed. These were administered by either pastor or teacher, in the deacon's seat. The service of baptism, if one may call it a service, consisted of an address or exhortation delivered to the congregation, the persons to be baptized, or, if children, to the parents; then prayer; then the formula, attended by the sprinkling of the water; then another prayer. This ended, there came the contribution. One of the deacons rose and said, "Brethren of the congregation, now there is time left for contribution, wherefore as God hath prospered you, so freely offer." No plates were passed, but a wooden box was placed in the deacon's seat, and the people came forward up one side of the church, put their money, or their pledges written on bits of paper, into the box, and passed down the other side of the church and back to their seats. Offerings were not confined to money or pledges. Any chattel property useful to the church, such as silver plate for the communion table, might be given. If it would not go into the box, it was placed in the deacon's seat. After the contribution there followed other business, such as acting upon applications for admission, or hearing cases of discipline and "denouncing" sentence. Candidates for admission were carefully examined beforehand by the elders as to faith and rectitude of living. If found satisfactory they were presented to the church on a Sunday afternoon and requested to make a public avowal of penitence and of the operation of grace in their own souls. Questions might be put to the candidate, and the testimony of any member of the church was invited either for or against the candidate's admission. When all were satisfied, the question was put whether it was the will of the church to admit this candidate to membership. The members of the congregation signified assent by raising their hands. One of the ministers then rehearsed the covenant to the candidate and asked him if he agreed thereto. Upon his affirmation the minister then promised that the church would observe toward him all the obligations of the covenant relation. Then there was a prayer, and the candidate was a member of the church in good and

regular standing. This was done without abbreviation or expedition for each separate candidate, and where there were any number the proceedings dragged out until very late in the afternoon.

Matters of church discipline were treated in the same cautious, painstaking fashion. If there was time a concluding psalm was sung, and with prayer and blessing the congregation was at last dismissed.

Now out of all this description it is difficult for us of the present generation to picture the olden-time church worship as anything but an oppressive occasion. It was unendurably tedious, utterly lacking in grace or tender charm, and marred by all too obvious physical awkwardness and discomfort. Our minds cannot avoid conjuring up the grotesque little details of the scene. If it was summer time there was the heat and the suffocation, the stertorous breathing, and the drowsy drone of insects forming a sleepy background of sound for the nasal whine of the preacher, which went on and on as though it would never cease. If it was winter there was the scuffling of frostbitten toes upon the bare floor, the squirming of aching bones upon the hard, cold benches, the constant coughing and sneezing from throats that had not as yet adjusted themselves to our New England climate. All this it is impossible to deny, yet I would like to maintain that under all these distractions there were features in their customary practice which, properly developed, might be assembled into a form of public worship that would be thoroughly Congregational, thoroughly consistent with the theory of the Congregational Order, and at the same time as dignified, as impressive, and therefore as beautiful in its way and for its worshipers as the splendid pomp of the full cathedral mass.

In the first place, there is the atmosphere of sincerity, the disdain to do anything meaningless, the absolute refusal to look upon this occasion as a sacramental rite, and the insistence that it shall be either an honest expression of the worshiper's own prayer and spiritual experience, or else nothing at all. The genuineness of the action and the difficulty of performing the action in any but a genuine way, that in itself is priceless and must form the basis for any structure of beauty.

In the second place, there is the simplicity, the paucity of detail, the very lack of ritualistic adornment, beginning with the architectural plainness of the meetinghouse and extending straight through the entire fabric of usage. That simplicity has unlimited aesthetic possibilities. Classic beauty is the beauty of line, of proportion, of suggested functionality. Pagan beauty is the beauty of extraneous color and superfluous ornamentation. The Puritan usage in public worship contains possibilities of classic beauty. Any architect will tell us that an open floor space, a bare wall, a plain, solid area, have great aesthetic value. Not only is it restful in itself to eyes that are weary with seeing, but it is also quieting and reassuring to the mind.

All our mental processes flow along in sequences that are logical and intelligible. Unconsciously the first thing we look for in a landscape, in a range of hills, in a system of waterways, is the topographical trend, the "lay of the land." The first thing we strain for in listening to a symphony is the dominant theme. The first thing we seek in reading an epoch of history is the single great ethnic or political tendency that characterizes that epoch. The first thing we strive to grasp in viewing a new building is the central meaning or structural principle of the fabric. The well-ordered mind is forever on the lookout, perhaps quite unconsciously, for the essential unity, the original functionality, the informing principle, in every object it contemplates; that unity, once grasped, makes the whole intelligible. But where that essential unity is so disguised or concealed as to elude the mind's search, there the mind is wearied and bewildered.

Every real artist shows the genuineness of his artistry by having mercy on the minds which are destined to contemplate his work. He never leaves them in doubt or "keeps them guessing" on these matters. Like Virgil, he placards his masterpiece with an obvious *arma virumque cano*, realizing that in so doing he is handing to all beholders the passport which will admit them to full understanding and enjoyment of every subsequent detail.

Where ornamentation is so lavishly applied that it distracts attention and serves to disguise the unity or the structural principle of the fabric in question it becomes grossly out of place. There is

but one excuse for such ornamentation—that the essential unity of the fabric is so hideous or deformed that it ought to be disguised, as in the case of some poor, misshapen girl who overloads her clothing with frills and ribbons in order to conceal her misfortune.

Assuming that such is not the case with an order of worship, one readily sees the value of the canon of simplicity. Just as in a piece of architecture the plain area, the simple column, the unadorned wall surface, not only rests the eye but reassures the mind by permitting it to grasp at once the structural theme of the whole fabric, so by analogy a method of worship that presents to the participant a sequence of well-proportioned plain areas, where but one thing is done for an appreciable length of time without distracting accessories and interruptions, possesses its undeniable value and beauty. It gives opportunity for the purpose of the occasion to assert itself to the worshiper, to come home to him with consistent force and sink in. For, after all, the experience of coming to yourself like the prodigal lies at the very heart of religion. Worship is among other things an act of self-recollection, or self-unification. To set up this process of self-unification in the soul of the worshiper is a prime purpose of every order of worship. When by its own simplicity, sincerity, and unity of design an order of worship can induce such a process it has earned the right to be called beautiful. It functions truly.

In the third place, there are a number of little customs, fixed ways of doing stated things, which, while quite inconsiderable in themselves, might when taken together constitute a humble ceremonial, or body of symbolism, that would be both beautiful and faithful to the Congregational tradition. For example, the formula by which the deacon invited the congregation to make their weekly contribution, which I have quoted above; again, the reading of the hymns before they were sung, which I suppose was a remnant of the custom of lining out the hymns, and which suggested those early days of poverty and deprivation when there were no hymn books, and when it cost real pains to worship God; again, the custom, which had a certain vogue in the New Haven colony, for the entire congregation to rise when the preacher announced his text and to remain on their feet while he sententiously read it

through; again, the custom which ordained that the elders should be actually seated about the communion table when the Lord's Supper was observed; again, the exceedingly sweet and tender formula of exchanging the covenant vows when one was admitted to the church, by which the candidate promised to observe the spirit of the covenant toward the church, and the church promised a corresponding faithfulness and loyalty toward the candidate—these and other customs are, I think, peculiar to Congregationalism. They are quaint, and their very quaintness gives them a great charm. They are strongly reminiscent of the directness of procedure, the singleness of aim, of our Puritan ancestors; softened by time, their very angularity becomes amiable; and, reminding subsequent generations of the austere and serious purpose of our ancestors, they stand as symbols rich in meaning, that cannot fail to beautify and dignify Congregational worship of today and help to hold it true to the lofty spirit of worship which has helped to make our country what it is.